

Graham Chaffee, "Bluebeard," from *The Most Important Thing and Other Stories* (Fantagraphics, 1995), pp. 15-26.

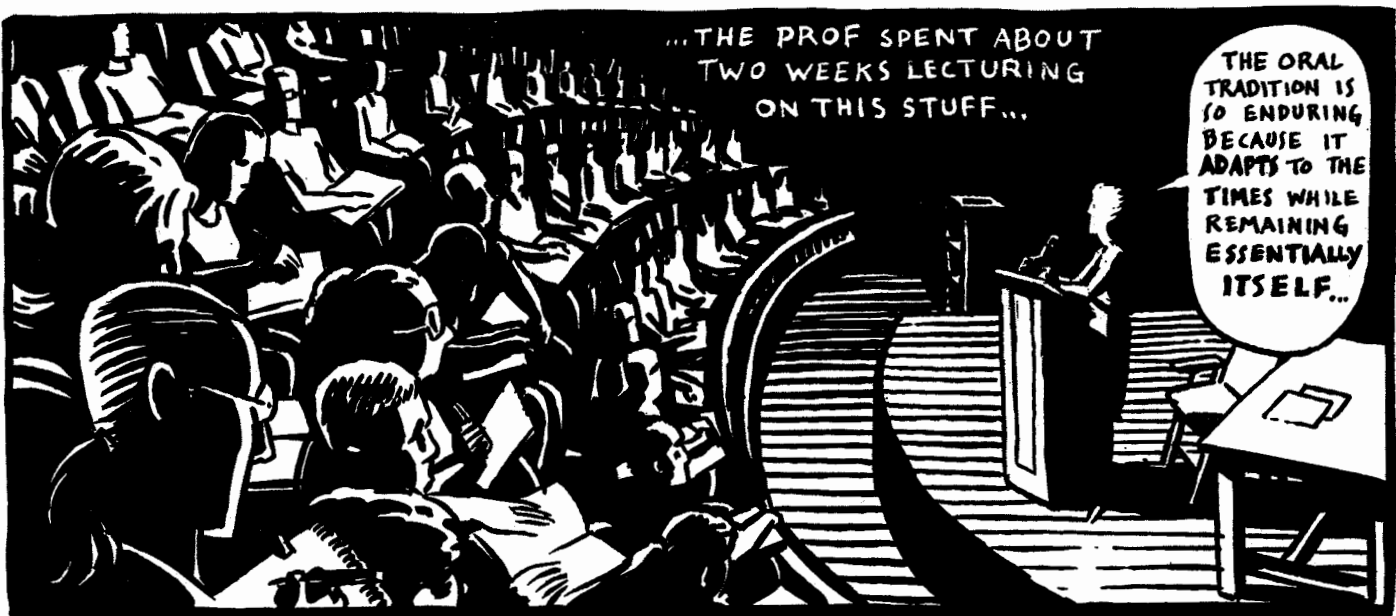
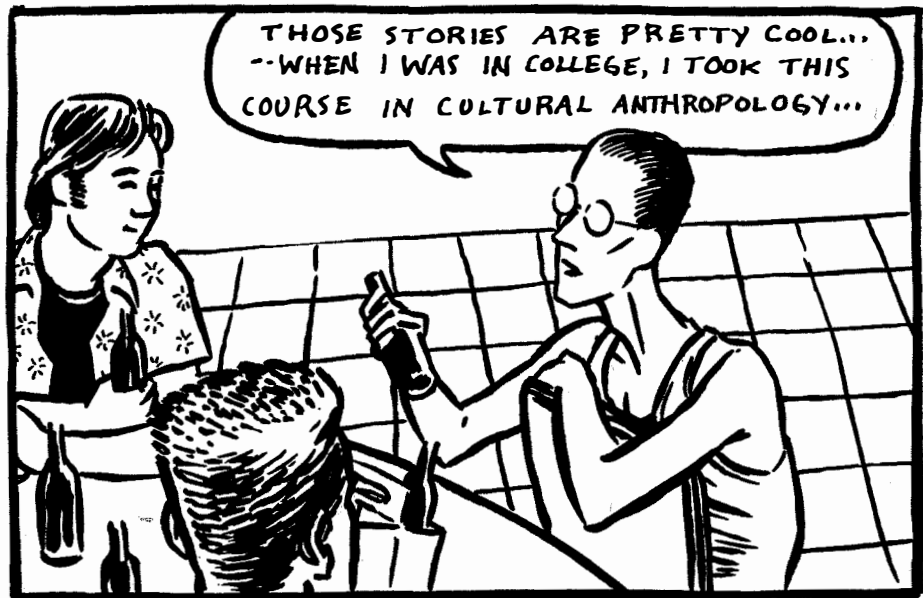
... ALL THE SHELVES
WERE STOCKED
WITH PRESERVES;
GALLON-SIZED
MASON JARS...

-- ONLY INSTEAD
OF JELLIES OR
PICKLED BEETS...

-- THEY WERE
FILLED WITH
HUMAN...
HEARTS!

BLUEBEARD





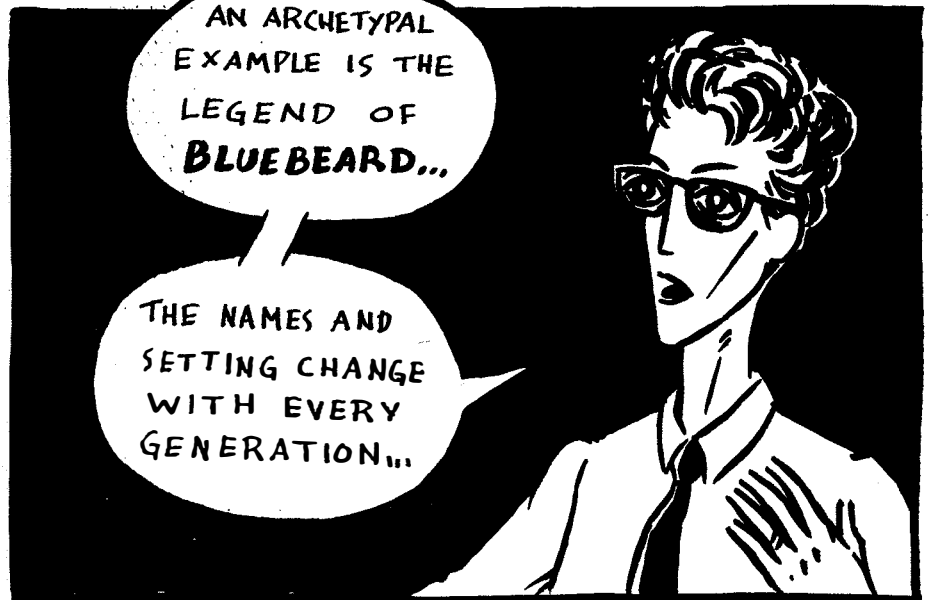
THIS FLUID-
BUT- STABLE
STRUCTURE
ALLOWS IT TO BE
SIMULTANEOUSLY
RELEVANT TO
THE PRESENT.

--
WHILE PROVIDING
TRADITIONAL
MORAL REF-
ERENCE POINTS...

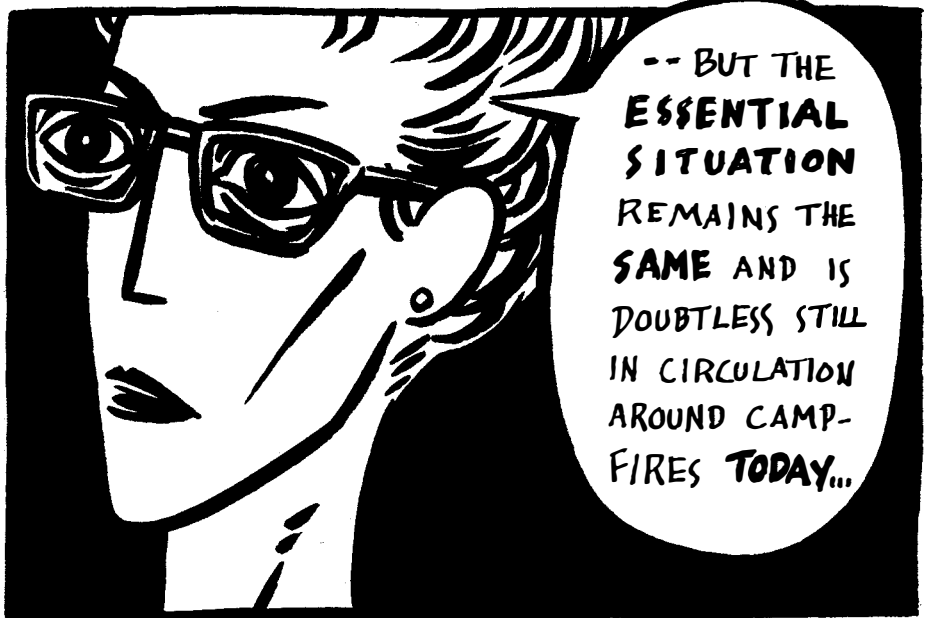


AN ARCHETYPAL
EXAMPLE IS THE
LEGEND OF
BLUEBEARD...

THE NAMES AND
SETTING CHANGE
WITH EVERY
GENERATION...



-- BUT THE
ESSENTIAL
SITUATION
REMAINS THE
SAME AND IS
DOUBTLESS STILL
IN CIRCULATION
AROUND CAMP-
FIRES **TODAY...**



...THE UPDATED VERSION TYPICALLY CENTERS
AROUND SOME OUTSIDER... AN OLD MAN
OR WOMAN WHO LIVES ALONE...

... A RICH OLD
WIDOW NAMED
AMELIA KNACKER...



SHE DID A LOT
OF CHARITY...



...HER BIG THING WAS
TO BRING HOME MADE
PIES TO THE TRAMPS
AND HOBOES IN JAIL...





... AND WHENEVER SHE
NEEDED WORK DONE AROUND
HER PLACE, HE'D ARRANGE
FOR SOME KID AT THE
JUVENILE HALL TO BE LET
OUT, DAYS- TO DO IT...



... IF THE KID DID A GOOD JOB
AND BUSTED HIS ASS ALL
SUMMER, HE'D GET PAID
CASH AND MAYBE GET HIS
SENTENCE REDUCED...



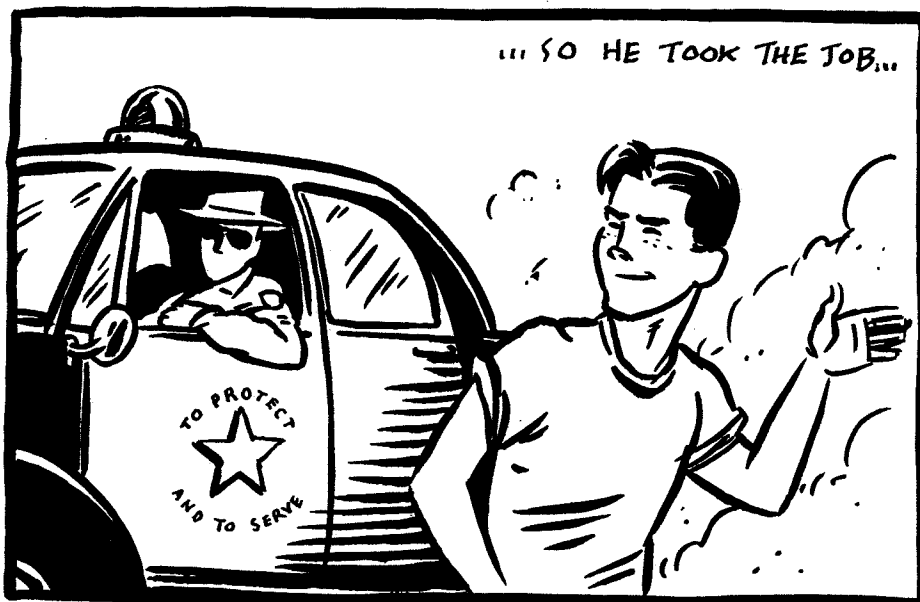
-- BUT IF HE WAS LAZY OR
A PUNK OR TRIED TO
RIP HER OFF...



... SHE'D GET THE SHERIFF
TO SEND THAT KID ON
UPSTATE TO DO FIELD-
WORK WITH THE LIFERS...

-- ANYWAY... THOSE KIDS
WEREN'T SEEN AROUND
ANY MORE...





THAT FIRST DAY, SHE TOOK HIM ALL OVER
THE HOUSE AND GROUNDS, POINTING OUT
ALL THE STUFF SHE WANTED DONE
AND WHERE THE TOOLS WERE...



FINALLY, SHE STOPPED IN FRONT
OF THE DOOR TO THE ROOT CELLAR...

NOW THIS IS ONE
PLACE I WANT YOU
TO STAY OUT OF...

"I'VE GOT ALLA' MY
PRESERVES AND SUCH
DOWN THERE AND
I DON'T WANT YOU
FOOLING AROUND AND
BREAKING A JAR OF
MY PICKLED CHERRIES"

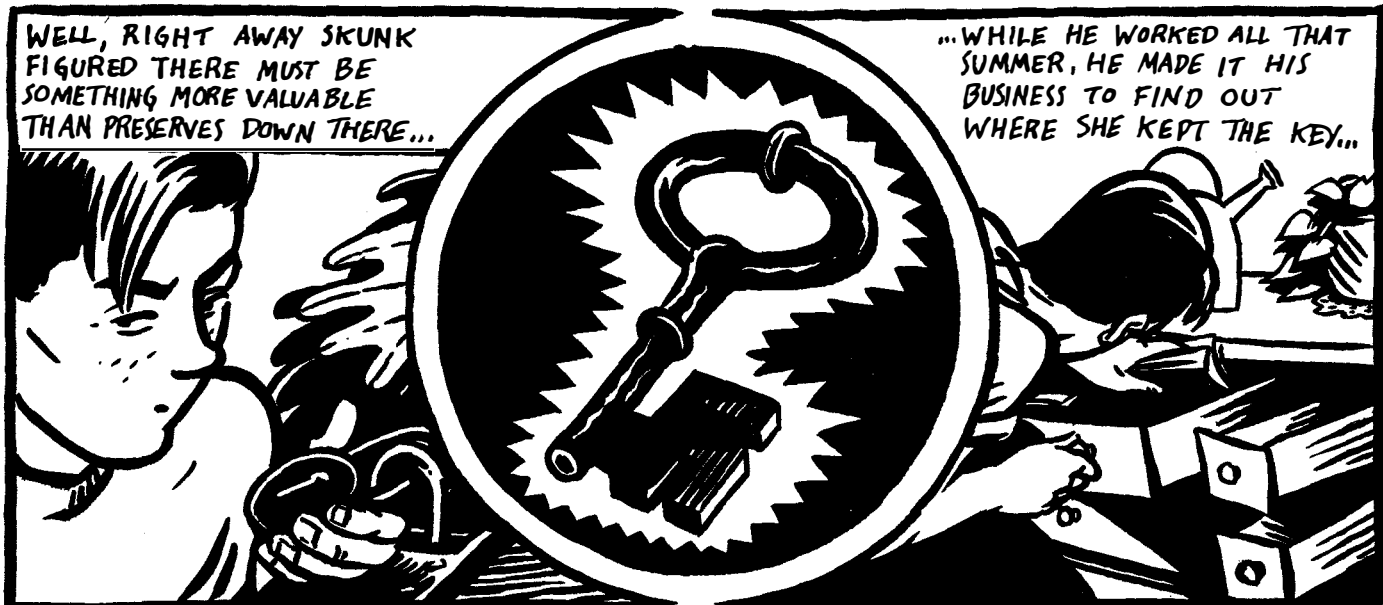


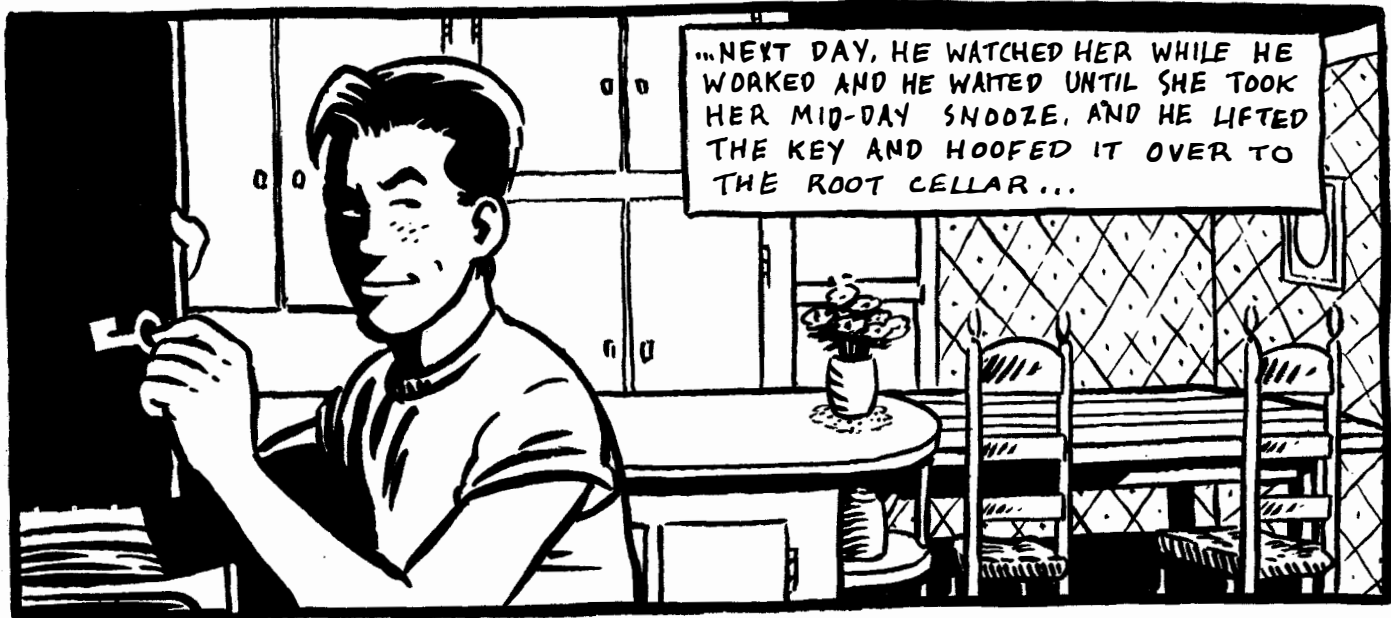
"IF YOU NEED A TOOL OR
SOMETHIN' FROM DOWN THERE
YOU COME AND ASK ME AND I'LL
GET IT AND BRING IT TO YOU..."

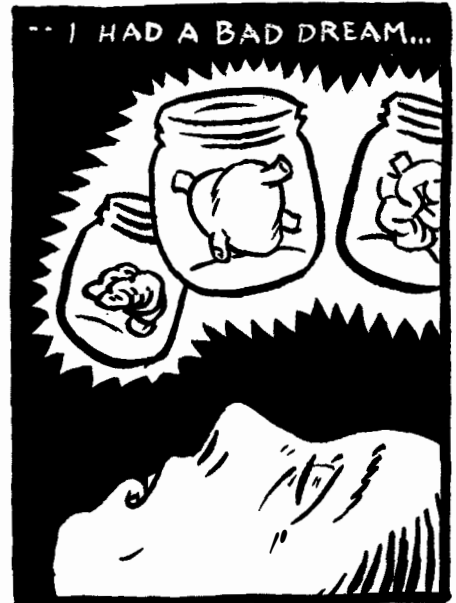


BUT YOU
STAY OUT!











... IT WAS SO **INTENSE**...
BUT, Y'KNOW?... I'VE THOUGHT
ABOUT IT; GONE OVER IT... AND
I'M PRETTY SURE I DIDN'T
GO TO CAMP THAT YEAR!



MONICA WENT, BUT I GOT
APPENDICITIS AND SPENT
THAT SUMMER IN THE
HOSPITAL...



I ASKED HER ABOUT IT
AND SHE SAID SHE DOESN'T
REMEMBER IF I WENT THAT
YEAR OR NOT-- BUT SHE'S
SURE SHE NEVER HEARD
THAT STORY AT CAMP
LITTLEFEATHER...



-- I'M TELLING YOU, SUSAN,
THIS IS REALLY BEGINNING
TO **BUG** ME! -- I MEAN,
JESUS... WAS I **THERE**
OR **NOT**?...



... IF NOT-- THEN WHERE
DID THIS MEMORY **COME**
FROM?-- DID I JUST
DREAM IT, OR **WHAT**?...



IT MAKES ME WONDER
WHAT OTHER PIECES OF
MY CHILDHOOD AREN'T
INVENTED...



OR ANY EXPERIENCE...
HOW DO I KNOW ANY
OF IT IS REAL?...



IS IT
REAL?...

